

Amrita Burdick
4528 Wyoming St.
Kansas City, MO 64111-4373

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Federal Election Commission
999 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20463
fax (202) 219-3923
(print copy to follow)

FEDERAL ELECTION
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To Whom It May Concern:

The Internet is an important contemporary forum for discussion and political advocacy. A powerful communication and informational tool, it has involved many more ordinary citizens in the political processes of this country. Internet sites have involved many more small donors, expanding the base of political contributions and supporting the goals of the McCain-Feingold Act.

I urge you to be very careful in protecting Constitutional Rights of Freedom of Speech in regard to the electoral process. I am especially concerned that individual volunteer work using Internet resources be protected. For instance, what difference is there in adding a banner or a link to an email -- or even a website-- than putting a sign in my front yard or wearing a candidate's button, or putting a bumper sticker on my car?

Independent blogs are important communication media-- making the Internet similar to a contemporary town hall meeting. Their function of disseminating and discussing social and political issues, including election topics is a citizen advocacy function and ordinarily should not be regulated according to campaign finance rules. The ability to communicate certainly should not be restricted solely according to the technology through which the communication occurs.

Any future regulations should be based solely on the limitation of activities which have contributed to abuse and corruption of the medium by big money interests. Such regulation should be narrowly defined in order not to limit the rights of ordinary citizens to participate in the political process. After all, isn't the participation of ordinary citizens what defines democracy?

Sincerely,

Amrita Burdick